

WHY THE WILDERNESS ACT?

W. A. WOLF

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The Forest Service had designated some 14½ million acres for wilderness purposes by the time the Wilderness Act had passed and the National Park Service was managing much of the roadless area within National Parks and Monuments for wilderness.

So why a Wilderness Act? There are many reasons, but perhaps the prime reasons were set forth in the summary of a report to the Outdoor Recreation Resource Review Commission by Mr. James P. Gilligan of the Wildland Research Center of the University of California. This summary was placed in the Congressional Record of May 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 31<sup>1962</sup> by Congressman John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania.

The following is quoted from that Record:

Mr. Saylor said:

"The need for legislation as a basis for the sound land administration that can preserve areas of wilderness is well set forth in the part of the wilderness report summary which I am here presenting.

ADMINISTRATION THE KEY

"Mr. Speaker, fortunately we do have areas of wilderness in our national ownership. How we handle them how we administer them, will

determine whether we shall continue to have them.

"This report points out four ways in which our wilderness in public ownership can pass away:

First. Our land-administering agencies can put it to other uses.

Second. Our agencies lack full jurisdiction over other uses that the lands, now wilderness, can be made to serve.

Third. There is a 'lack of coordinated control over wilderness uses.'

Fourth. There is at present a 'lack of distinctiveness in management policy, which can result in subtle deterioration of the resource itself.'

#### ADMINISTRATION UNDER LAW

"To avoid these hazards to wilderness preservation we accordingly need sound and effective administration, and this can be accomplished only along guidelines that Congress must provide."

The following excerpts from the report show in part the basis for Mr. Saylor's statements:

(c) LACK OF COORDINATED CONTROL

"Within national forests, wilderness areas are administered as special designations; but responsibility for management may be compartmentalized among several ranger districts on a single forest, on separate national forests, or even, in four tracts, in separate forests under different regional authority.

"Since many forces are already at work to diminish the the total supply of wilderness, artificial administrative factors - which contribute to a lack of coordination in management and therefore tend to accelerate these forces - should be reexamined by all agencies having authority over wilderness tracts. Closer interagency and also inservice relations should be established for the administration of each wilderness tract.

(d) LACK OF DISTINCTIVENESS IN MANAGEMENT POLICY

"Even if better unification of management authority were achieved, a major problem in wilderness management would remain. In most instances, agencies responsible for management of wilderness tracts have recognized the need for special forms of recreational management. Less often,



however, have they recognized the need to manage wilderness lands - especially their biology - for maintenance of wilderness environments which are essential for provision of all wilderness values. Partly this is a reflection of fragmentized authority; but mainly it results from the fact that personnel with on-the-ground responsibilities generally have training and experience - and concepts which spring from these factors - oriented toward the management of land for commercial resources and for mass recreation rather than for the retention of wilderness values. The objectives of these broad forms of management and the practices they require are radically different.

"A definitive purpose in management of wilderness lands is to perpetuate their natural condition. For practical purposes, this condition must be defined in terms of minimum interference with the natural conditions which exist.

✓ A major conclusion arising from this study, and one of which many of its recommendations are based, is that most of the value of wilderness tracts depends on the existence of sharp contrast between wilderness tracts and the rest of the country. Within this framework, therefore, the aim of minimum interference is not only appropriate but essential.

"Generally, neither the Park Service nor the Forest Service has managed its wilderness lands with this objective in mind.

"A further management tendency inconsistent with wilderness concepts is to view wilderness almost exclusively as a recreational resource.

"...there is room for reevaluation of trends presently evident toward management to produce specific preconceived conditions on the area, or to maintain existing conditions, rather than toward management involving minimum interference with biological processes.

#### (e) RECREATION USE

"Retention of the opportunity for a wilderness recreation experience - freedom from crowds and evidences of recreation overuse - is equally important to maintenance of wilderness land character, and probably more difficult. Field investigations and reports completed for this study indicate that an overemphasis on encouragement of recreational use and construction of developments to accommodate more users, exists among agencies administering wilderness areas. The total values of wilderness seem sufficiently valid to justify wilderness reserves without heavy use. It is apparent that wildernesses cannot furnish recreation to an unending increase of users and remain wilderness. To alleviate loss of wilderness

values through excessive recreation use we suggest that the following measures be considered:

- (1) Determination of recreation use capacities for specific zones of wilderness tracts - for ecological, social, and recreational values.
- (2) Improvement of distributions of users, curtailment of use where it exceeds capacity, and improvement of techniques to reduce impact per user-day.
- (3) Subordination or stringent control of use by large parties and packing outfits especially where use is predominately by hikers.
- (4) Exercise of restraint in locating, improving, and extending motor approach roads to wilderness boundaries, and in improving wilderness trails or campsites. Access roads can be important management tools in influencing the amount and controlling the distribution of recreation use in wilderness areas.
- (5) Development of extensive wilderness use education and training programs by agencies administering wilderness areas."



Two points come through loud and clear: the wilderness resource ✓  
takes precedence over all other uses in a Wilderness, and administration must be consistent.

Our objective here this week is to achieve full understanding of the wilderness resource and management objectives and to provide a basis for uniform administration of Wilderness throughout Region 1.